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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General seeks intensified efforts to find political solution to continued fighting in Afghanistan.

- Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari reports that Kuwait has made "remarkable progress" in dealing with immediate humanitarian needs.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar today expressed deep concern about the continued fighting and loss of lives and devastation in Afghanistan.

In a statement made through his spokeswoman he said he had been following closely developments in Afghanistan, and in particular the recent events in Khost.

The Secretary-General reiterated his appeal to all Afghans to put their national interest above all other interests, to resolve their differences through a political process which would ensure the exercise of their right to self-determination and establish a broad-based government which would enjoy the confidence of the vast majority of the Afghan people.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar also appealed to all parties concerned to treat the prisoners of war in accordance with established international norms and allow the access of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

He said the recent events in Khost emphasized the urgency to find a political settlement and should strengthen the resolve of the international community to intensify its efforts towards that end.

The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, who is currently in the area, is in contact with all parties concerned.

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For information media—not an official record

Kuwait had made "remarkable progress" in dealing with immediate humanitarian needs, according to a report by Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari to the Secretary-General on the situation in the country.

Mr. Ahtisaari reported that although Kuwait had suffered severe devastation and looting during Iraqi occupation, the country had made remarkable progress in meeting humanitarian needs and was moving swiftly towards reconstruction with the help of its friends and allies.

The Under-Secretary-General said the removal of explosives was one of the most urgent humanitarian needs facing the country as citizens continued to return home. Another area of major concern was the burning of oil wells and the impact on health, the environment and the economy. He reported that about half of Kuwait's oil wells, about 500 to 800, were set on fire by Iraqi forces and it was estimated that about 4 million to 6 million barrels of oil were literally going up in smoke each day.

Briefing correspondents on his report at Headquarters this morning, Mr. Ahtisaari stressed the conclusion by his team that the priority humanitarian needs in Kuwait involved environmental and health issues and mine/ordinance clearance. Citing an example of the mine problem, he said that on a three kilometre stretch of beach, some 6,000 mines had been detected.

Asked by correspondents about the possibility that Kuwaiti children might be relocated due to health concerns, Mr. Ahtisaari said that some 400,000 Kuwaitis residing abroad had been asked to delay their return, and the Government might provide other Kuwaitis with the opportunity to go abroad.

The Under-Secretary-General was designated by the Secretary-General in February to assess the humanitarian needs of Iraq and Kuwait, and has earlier reported to the Security Council on the humanitarian needs of Iraq.

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